

Message Text

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UNCLAS MONTREAL 1439

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: LANGUAGE ISSUE STILL ON FRONT BURNER

1. DESPITE RECENT PASSAGE OF BILL 101 INTO LAW, PROTESTANT SCHOOL BOARD OF GREATER MONTREAL (PSBGM) VOTED UNANIMOUSLY MONDAY EVENING TO ENROLL CHILDREN IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS WHO HAD ATTENDED SUCH SCHOOLS ILLEGALLY (I.E., NOT IN COMPLIANCE WITH PROVISIONS OF FORMER LAW, BILL 22) LAST YEAR. ALSO TO BE ADMITTED WERE THOSE REGISTERED BETWEEN MARCH AND PASSAGE OF BILL 101 ON AUGUST 26TH, WHETHER OR NOT THEY MEET CRITERIA OF NEW LAW. NOT LEAST, BOARD VOTED TO ASK FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO TEST CONSTITUTIONALITY OF BILL 101 IN SUPREME COURT AND, ACCORDING ONE SPOKESMAN ON RADIO THIS MORNING, WILL ITSELF BRING SUIT IF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT WITHHOLDS NORMAL GRANTS BECAUSE OF THE CRITERIA USED FOR ADMITTING THESE STUDENTS. (EDUCATION MINISTER JACQUES-YVAN MORIN RECENTLY REFERRED TO SUCH STUDENTS AS "NON-PERSONS" AND SAID GRANTS WOULD NOT BE MADE.) SEPARATE RESOLUTION, PASSED BY SEVEN TO SIX, APPEARS TO PUT MORE ONUS ON PARENTS OF FUTURE STUDENTS (E.E., THOSE ENROLLING AFTER AUGUST 26), WHO WILL BE INFORMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT ISSUE "SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATES" TO STUDENTS ENROLLED ILLEGALLY AND TO WHOM IT

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WILL BE "SUGGESTED" THEY SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO MONTREAL STAR REPORTAGE UNDER HEADLINE "PSBGM TO OFFER FREEDOM OF CHOICE", SCHOOLS WILL ACCEPT STUDENTS ON BASIS OF PARENT'S STATEMENT THAT CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IF PARENTS ACCEPT THAT BURDEN. ACCORDING MONTREAL'S GAZETTE, HOWEVER, FINAL DECISION ON LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION IN THESE LATTER CASES WILL BE LEFT

TO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.

2. MONTREAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMISSION (MCSC), ON OTHER HAND, VOTED SAME EVENING TO APPLY BILL 101 CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION, BUT UNDER THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION OF WHAT IT MEANS IN ABSENCE OF REQUESTED CLARIFICATION FROM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. THIS BOARD INTERPRETS "PARENT WHO ATTENDED ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOL" AS ONE WHO ATTENDED AT LEAST THREE YEARS BUT NOT NECESSARILY THROUGHOUT PRIMARY EDUCATION. MCSC HAD PAVED WAY FOR THIS DECISION WITH EARLIER ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO START TEACHING ENGLISH IN SOME FRANCOPHONE SCHOOLS IN FIRST GRADE, VICE PRESENT POLICY OF BEGINNING IN GRADE FIVE. IT HOPES THUS TO EASE HISTORIC AND CONTINUING CONCERNS OF IMMIGRANT -- AND MANY FRENCH -- FAMILIES ABOUT INADEQUACY OF ENGLISH TRAINING IN FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS. THIS POLICY OBVIOUSLY DISPLEASES CAMILLE LAURIN AND FRENCH TEACHERS' UNION BUT GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET INTERVENED TO PREVENT ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

3. PROBABLY AS RESULT OF WHICH LANGUAGE MEETINGS WERE CONDUCTED IN, GAZETTE REPORTED ONLY PSBGM STORY AND LE DEVOIR THAT OF MCSC. ANGLOPHONE RADION REPORTING BOTH HOWEVER AND IT LIKELY AFTERNOON PAPERS (IN EACH LANGUAGE) WILL DO SAME.
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